



Introduction



This report, *Making A Difference for America's Small Farmers and Ranchers in the 21st Century*, highlights the progress and achievements by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in its continuing efforts to enhance the reliability and economic livelihood of small farmers and ranchers across America. It also highlights the major achievements and continuing actions taken by USDA in response to the 8-policy goals and 146 recommendations included in the Commission's report, *A Time to*

Act, published in January 1998 (see Appendix 3 of this report for a summary of the number of recommendations implemented by USDA).

The report was prepared by a Department-wide group of Small Farms coordinators, representing each mission area; individual agencies; the Offices of Outreach, Civil Rights, Budget and Program Analysis, Communications, Chief Economist, and the General Counsel.

The USDA Small Farms Coordinators published its first progress and achievements report, *Meeting the Challenge of a Time to Act: USDA Progress and Achievements on Small Farms*, in April 2000. The report highlighted USDA's progress and achievements on issues related to small farms and ranches for the period, February 1998 to December 1999. The second report primarily covered the time period, January 2000 through September 2001. This report primarily covers the time period, October 2001 through December 2003, and is available only on the USDA Small Farms web site. The web site address is www.usda.gov/oce/smallfarm.

It is anticipated that a fourth report will be issued in the near future to highlight progress and achievements since 2003.

USDA's progress and achievements in the area of small farms are divided into the following program areas which are the same areas listed in the last report.

Program Areas

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| I. Outreach | VII. Research and Extension |
| II. Market Development | VIII. Beginning Farmers |
| III. Market Access | IX. Farm Workers |
| IV. Risk Management | X. Civil Rights |
| V. Conservation | XI. Additional Small Farms Initiatives |
| VI. Credit and Finance | XII. Appendixes |